

Breastfeeding and Trauma

Potential Challenges and Possible Benefits



Kathleen Kendall-Tackett, PhD, IBCLC, FAPA

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Key points about trauma and breastfeeding



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1 Trauma is Common



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■ Suburban ■ Urban

2,128 mothers from Project Viva (urban and suburban), 1509 mothers Project Access (urban)

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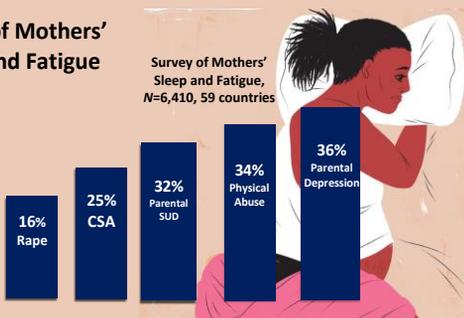
PRENATAL DEPRESSION LIFETIME ABUSE

Rich-Edwards et al. 2011, *Int J Epidemiol*, 40, 375-384

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Survey of Mothers' Sleep and Fatigue

Survey of Mothers' Sleep and Fatigue, N=6,410, 59 countries



16% Rape

25% CSA

32% Parental SUD

34% Physical Abuse

36% Parental Depression

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- Refugees/asylum seekers
- Natural disasters
- Birth trauma
- Adverse childhood experiences
- Intimate partner violence

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Trauma survivors breastfeed at similar rates to non trauma survivors

- Their rates often exceed their non-abused peers



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What is trauma?



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For Every MOM

BABY KIDS TEENS

The Mommy Wars Gave Me Breastfeeding PTSD

By Amy Kynard August 5, 2019



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Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th Edition

DSM-5 PTSD Diagnostic Criteria for PTSD

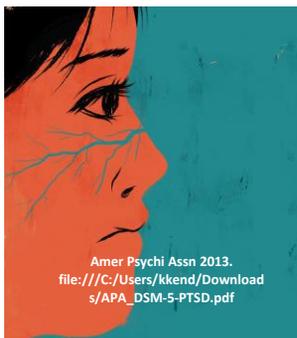


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A. The person exposed to the following events:

- Death or threatened death
- Actual or threatened serious injury
- Actual or threatened sexual violation

Amer Psychi Assn 2013.
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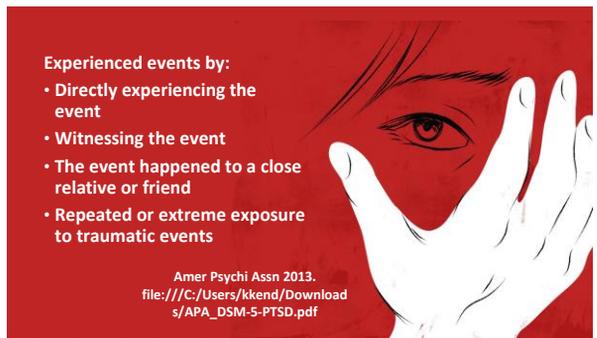


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Experienced events by:

- Directly experiencing the event
- Witnessing the event
- The event happened to a close relative or friend
- Repeated or extreme exposure to traumatic events

Amer Psychi Assn 2013.
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Symptoms in Four Clusters

- Re-experiencing
- Avoidance
- Negative changes in mood and cognitions
- Changes in hyperarousal



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- Symptoms for at least one month
- Significant impairment in daily life



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International Classification of Diseases, 11th Edition ICD-11 PTSD criteria



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- Exposure to a *threatening or horrific event or series of events*
- Symptoms
 - Re-experiencing of the traumatic event
 - Avoidance of traumatic reminders
 - Hypervigilance
 - Symptoms lasting for several weeks

Haravuori et al. 2016 *BMC Psychiatry*, 16, 140 (2016)



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Can you have breastfeeding trauma?



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Amer Psychi Assn 2013.
file:///C:/Users/kkend/Downloads/APA_DSM-5-PTSD.pdf



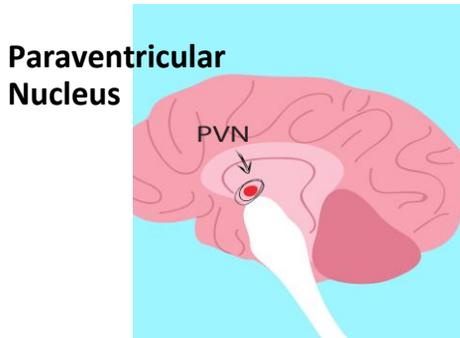
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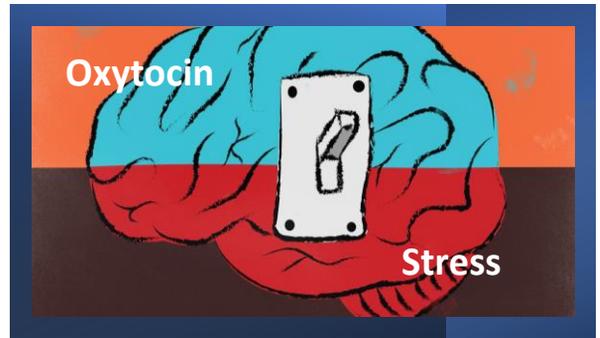
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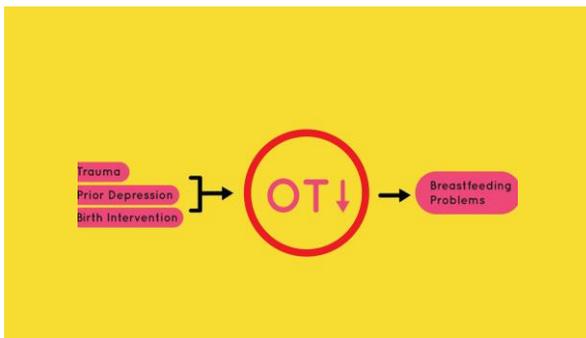
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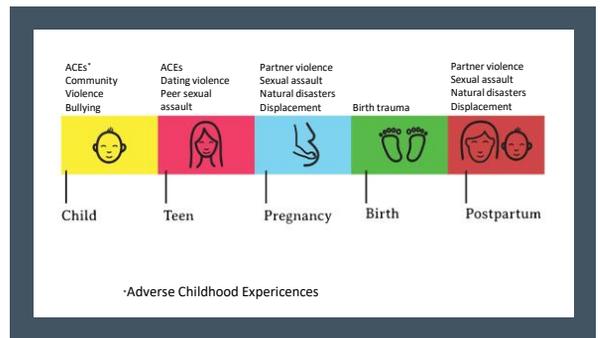
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Recent or ongoing trauma may influence of breastfeeding more directly by suppressing oxytocin and prolactin

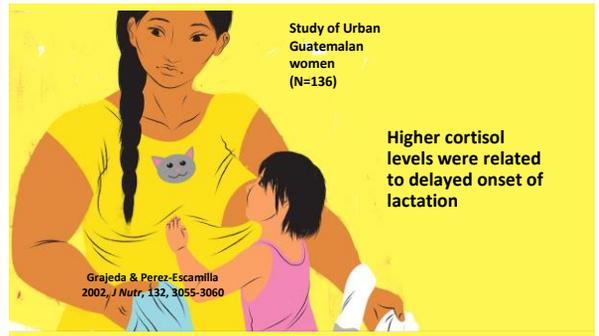


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Study of Urban Guatemalan women (N=136)

Higher cortisol levels were related to delayed onset of lactation

Grajeda & Perez-Escamilla 2002, *J Nutr*, 132, 3055-3060



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- Childhood trauma is less likely to impact breastfeeding directly
- The sequelae can lead to breastfeeding cessation
- Treating sequelae can have a positive impact on breastfeeding



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53,934 women, Norwegian Mother and Child Cohort Study. 19% reported adult abuse, 18% reported child abuse

Breastfeeding cessation strongly associated with both childhood and adult abuse

Sorbo et al. 2015, *BMJ Open*, 5(12), e009240



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22% more likely: childhood sexual violence

41% more likely: one or more types of violence

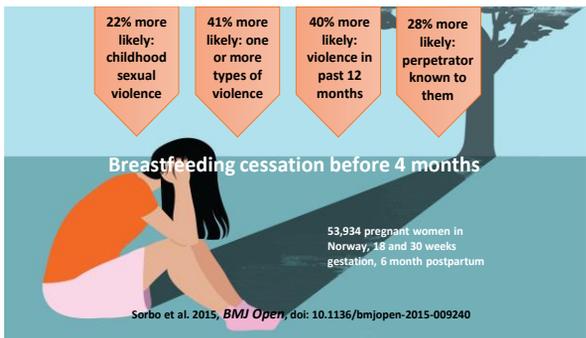
40% more likely: violence in past 12 months

28% more likely: perpetrator known to them

Breastfeeding cessation before 4 months

53,934 pregnant women in Norway, 18 and 30 weeks gestation, 6 month postpartum

Sorbo et al. 2015, *BMJ Open*, doi: 10.1136/bmjopen-2015-009240



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2621 women in Melbourne, Australia, 6.3% reported IPV

Breastfeeding rates did not differ significantly between intimate-partner violence (IPV) and non-IPV groups

James et al. 2014, *Breastfeeding Rev*, 22(2), 11-19



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Qualitative study of 36 refugee mothers from Vietnam or Myanmar who settled in Australia

- Stress from being in a different culture contributed to early breastfeeding cessation for recent arrivals
- Social support, learning English, and a longer stay aided breastfeeding

Joseph et al. 2019, *J Adv Nurs*, doi:10.1111/jan.14110



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24 studies, 13,749 women

20% of immigrants had PPD, twice that of native-born population

Falah-Hassani et al. 2015, *J Psychiat Res*, 70, 67-82



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- Evacuation led to lower breastfeeding rates and increased infant formula use
- Evacuees experienced stress during and after evacuation due to
 - Moving from place to place
 - Food insecurity assoc with formula
 - Warding off unhealthy food for older children
 - Managing family reunification

Primary caregivers for infants 0-36 mo, Evacuees, Ft. McMurray Wildfire, mixed methods, recruited via social media

DeYoung et al. 2018 *Matern Child Health J*, 12, 1826-1833



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- Breastfeeding comforted infants
- And was a source of empowerment

DeYoung et al. 2018 *Matern Child Health J*, 12, 1826-1833



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Common sequelae of trauma include

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Posttraumatic stress disorder
- Chronic pain
- These sequelae are related to early cessation/non-initiation



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Review of 43 studies of child abuse and partner violence

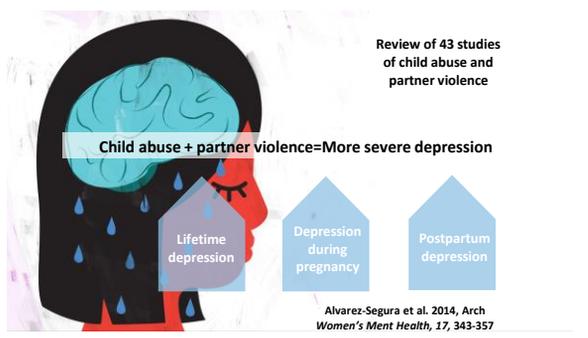
Child abuse + partner violence = More severe depression

Lifetime depression

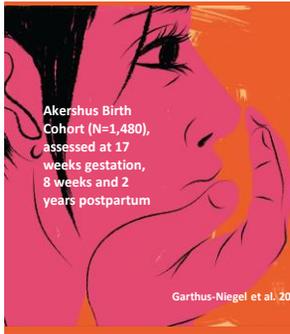
Depression during pregnancy

Postpartum depression

Alvarez-Segura et al. 2014, *Arch Women's Ment Health*, 17, 343-357



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Akershus Birth Cohort (N=1,480), assessed at 17 weeks gestation, 8 weeks and 2 years postpartum

- Postpartum PTSD increased the risk of not breastfeeding by 6 times
- PTSD also associated with not continuing breastfeeding to 12 mos

Garthus-Niegel et al. 2018 *Birth*, 45(2), 193-201

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History of violence increased

- Breastfeeding cessation for White women
- Likelihood of a breastfeeding plan and initiation for Black women

Low-income women in upstate New York (N=760)

Holland et al. 2017, *Matern Child Health J*, Aug 1, doi: 10.1007/s10995-017-2357-1.

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Trauma is more to be severe if there is:

- Repeated trauma
- Severe acts
- Injury
- Interpersonal trauma
- Childhood trauma

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Breastfeeding can particularly be helpful for trauma survivors

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Breastfeeding stops the intergenerational transmission of violence

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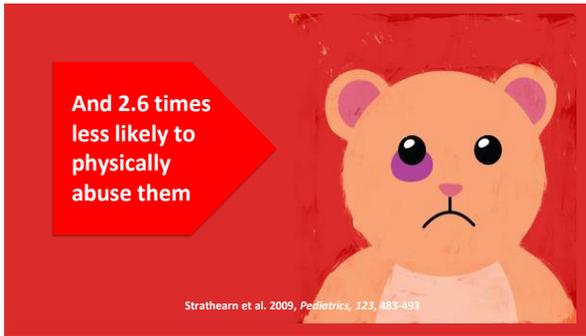


15-year longitudinal study, 7,223 Australian mother-infant dyads

Mothers who breastfed for 4 months were 3.8 times less likely to neglect their children

Strathearn et al. 2009, *Pediatrics*, 123, 483-493

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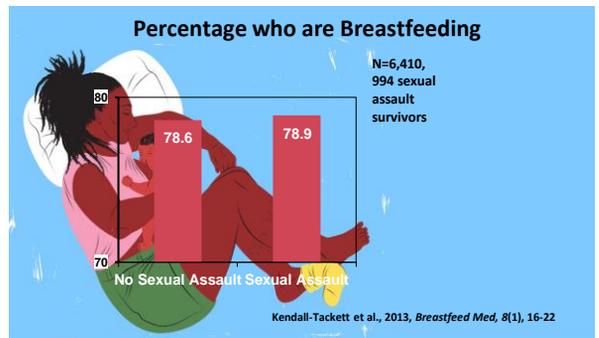
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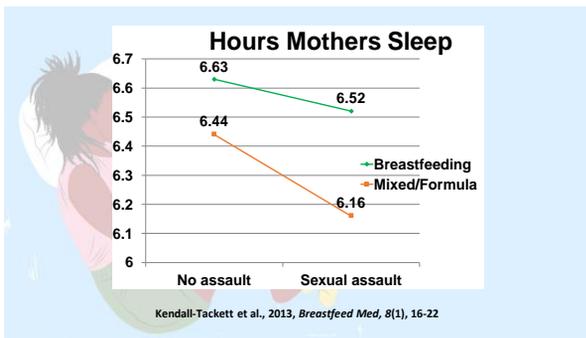
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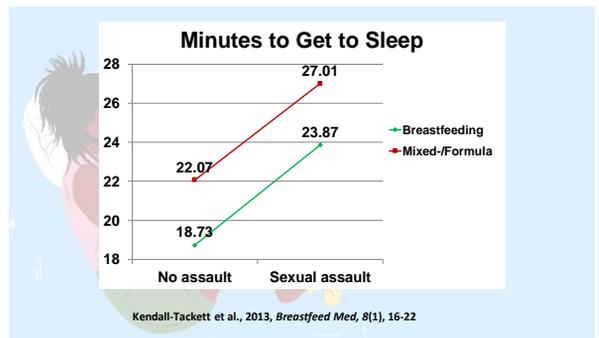
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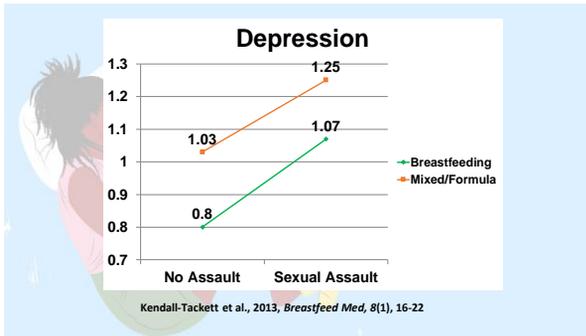
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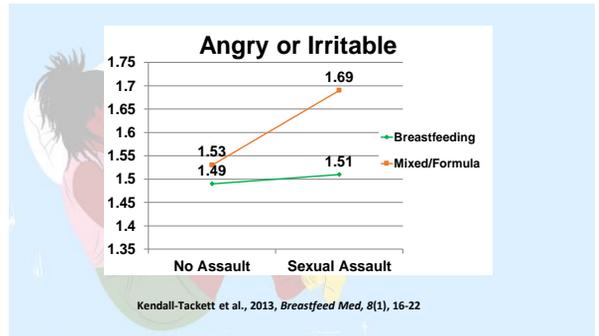
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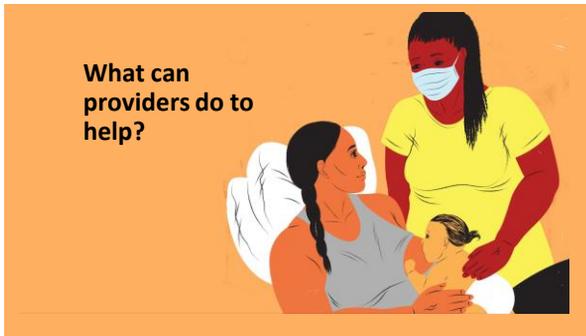
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- Make breastfeeding more comfortable
- Help mothers learn what is normal
- Make a referral
- Educate care providers about breastfeeding



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Don't Go It Alone
 Supervision
 Team approach
 Therapy

Limit Your Involvement
 Balance caseload
 Leave work at office
 Set boundaries

Take Care of Your Body



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Increase oxytocin

- Skin-to-skin contact
- Touch
- Positive social interaction
- Safety
- Warmth



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Find Me on Social Media

 Kathleen Kendall-Tackett
 Kathy Kendall-Tackett @UptySciChick
 Kathleen Kendall-Tackett

Email: kkendallt@gmail.com Illustrations by Ken@praeclearuspress.com



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